



## **Envision Arlington Standing Committee**

Date: Wednesday, October 14, 2020  
Time: 7:30 - 9:00 PM  
Location: Zoom

Attendees: Alex Bagnall, Juli Brazille, Scott Lever, Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Michael Brownstein, Greg Christiana, Kelly Lynema, Rebecca Gruber, Elisabeth Dray

### **Minutes**

#### **1. Introductions**

Alex Bagnall, recently-appointed Standing Committee member, introduced himself and shared his interest in working with and on the Standing Committee. He is the ARB appointee, replacing Jennifer Toole, whose term expired in 2019.

#### **2. Approve minutes**

Because the draft minutes were not shared with committee members in advance, Kelly will distribute and post with the November agenda for review and approval at next month's meeting.

#### **3. Ethics information to Town Committees (Kelly Lynema)**

Kelly reminded members of the committee who have not yet completed their State ethics training to submit their certificates.

#### **4. Discussion and Planning on the annual Town Survey**

##### **a. 2020 Town Survey**

Scott presented a copy of the 2020 survey that Juli shared on the Trello board. Juli explained that this was the first survey administered at the individual, versus household, level. The committee's goal is to develop a survey that takes no more than 15 minutes to complete; the 2020 survey took approximately 13 minutes for most respondents.

Juli provided an overview of the survey, including a brief discussion of the topic areas that were covered:

- Resilience and preparedness for climate change, which was developed at the request and in collaboration with Sustainable Arlington
- Housing, developed in partnership with the Department of Planning and Community Development as the ARB and Select Board began joint conversations on the topic
- Election questions, prepared with the Election Modernization Study Committee, who is already making proposals based on survey results
- Net Zero Plan, developed with the Department of Planning and Community Development as framing questions in advance of the larger Net Zero Plan survey released this past summer. Both surveys inform the development of the Net Zero Plan,.

- Open Space questions which were prepared to support the work beginning now on the Open Space Plan
- Reducing Plastic Waste questions prepared in cooperation with Zero Waste Arlington; data will help inform restaurants and business owners on community preferences on single-use plastics
- Demographics

Juli and Kelly explained that the demographics questions are important for three reasons:

- Cross tabulating results to understand the more nuanced perspectives of groups that may be closer or more impacted by topics on the survey
- Understanding the degree to which Arlington's population diversity is represented in survey responses; responses are compared with American Community Survey and Census Bureau demographic data
- Demonstrating to the Community Development Block Grant Administrator/Coordinator that CDBG-eligible populations are represented in survey responses, and more particularly understanding the specific needs and preferences of CDBG-eligible individuals.

Kelly pointed out that having survey professionals involved in reviewing and critiquing both questions under each topic area as well as how the demographic questions are written has been important, and thanked Juli for assembling a qualified team of volunteers to provide their expertise. Scott emphasized the importance of having demographic data available for longitudinal comparisons. The group will invite Jill Harvey to review the phrasing of demographic questions for 2021 as well.

Scott will email the 2020 survey to the Standing Committee Google group. Kelly pointed out that prior years survey reports are available at [arlingtonma.gov/envision](http://arlingtonma.gov/envision) (click on the left-nav link for "Survey Results")

b. Outreach to gather ideas for additional topics / topics for next year

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The group discussed boards, committees, and departments to reach out to for topics for the 2021 survey. Scott is particularly interested in questions around education and how Town services and residents' experiences of interacting with the Town has changed in light of COVID-19.

The group also discussed the distinction between the Town survey's focus of providing data and information on projects and timely initiatives to boards, committees, and departments versus using the survey as a performance review. Juli pointed out that responses to topics regularly inform proposals or decisions in town (see earlier comment about the Election Modernization Committee using 2020 survey data to present policy change proposals).

Kelly mentioned that while both decision makers and leadership as well as task groups and committees are invited to submit questions, there is not a guarantee that all topic areas will be included in the survey each year. It is important to vet proposed topic areas with other Town Departments, boards, and committees who may be doing ongoing work or developing plans related to those topics to make sure the timing is effective and will help inform decisions. Juli stated that the survey is most helpful when a group is evaluating multiple ideas and trying to figure out which two or three would

best meet the needs of residents, be most interesting to the community, or help raise the profile of a project being developed.

Elisabeth suggested that the 2021 survey may be a good opportunity to do a wellness check on the community on issues ranging from schools (virtual learning, etc.), residents' economic and physical security, and how Town services and departments can best meet residents' needs during the particular challenges presented by the pandemic.

**c. Next Steps**

Scott reviewed the list of other boards, committees, and departments on Trello and committee members signed up to reach out to specific individuals.

- Juli will reach out to the Council on Aging
  - Greg will reach out to HRC, Jill Harvey, DTG, Rainbow Commission
  - Scott will reach out to Parks & Recreation Department
  - Scott and Greg will reach out to the chairs of Envision Arlington task groups
  - Kelly will reach out to Long Range Planning and Town Manager
- i.

**5. Update on Task Groups**

No updates.

**6. Budget update**

Elisabeth reported that because of COVID-19, we were able to roll everything over to this fiscal year, and currently have \$5,500 in our account. We won't have town day expenses this year, therefore we need to start reaching out to task groups now and see what they might be able to move forward with. We are looking for alternative ideas about engagement and how that might happen.

Elisabeth will reach out to task group chairs to get this started and will report back at the November meeting.

**7. New Business**

Big thanks and kudos to Juli and the Clerk's office for everything they are doing to facilitate voting this year!

Meeting adjourned at 8:56pm